

employees who have just lost their unemployment, and the 2 million who will lose their benefits by the end of 2002.

In my State of Texas I called and worked with the Department of Labor to set up a rapid response team to help displaced workers find the jobs that they need. But much more needs to be done. Last night I had an amendment that would have extended unemployment benefits for 1 year. That would have gone a long way toward helping Americans and stimulating the economy. Today, I urge an up or down vote on an economic stimulus package that is responsible and targets unemployed workers only.

Mr. MATSUI. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Mrs. CLAYTON).

(Mrs. CLAYTON asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. CLAYTON. Mr. Speaker, we have many unemployed persons in my district. In North Carolina alone we have 28,000 people who have exhausted their insurance already. We have experienced an increase of 105 percent in unemployment. We need to stop the bickering, stop the shenanigans between the two Chambers of Congress and do something for the millions of Americans who need our help.

Mr. Speaker, after 8 years of economic prosperity, and budget surpluses, the nation's economy is spiraling downward. Consumer confidence is declining, unemployment is rising, and deficit spending is returning.

Today, we are considering a bill that would extend for 13 weeks unemployment benefits for displaced workers. During the past year, more than 1.5 million jobs were lost. Many unemployed persons have exhausted their unemployment benefits.

In my State, North Carolina, more than 28,000 people have exhausted their unemployment benefits, and we have experienced an increase of 105 percent in unemployment. Others were not eligible for unemployment compensation or health care benefits because they worked for short periods of time, or in temporary or part-time jobs.

A national economic stimulus package must provide additional relief for unemployed workers. Helping unemployed workers is the first thing to do and it is the smart policy to address the economic slowdown. This certainly is more effective than more huge tax cuts for large corporations and wealthy individuals. Unfortunately, this \$81 billion bill only provides about \$10 billion in benefits for workers and their families. Most of the relief provided would benefit wealthy individuals and large corporations. Most economists agree that in a recession, we should increase consumer confidence and their ability to purchase necessary goods and services. Unemployed workers lack such confidence and purchasing capacity.

Simply paying money to state governments for unemployment compensation programs without requiring some adjustments in program administration would not be wise. Many states, like the Federal Government, are financially distressed. They cannot afford to match federal contributions, to expand coverage periods beyond 26 weeks, or to increase categories of eligible workers such as part-time workers. The current crisis calls for these

changes plus adjusting the federal/state match from 50/50 to a larger federal share, perhaps 75/25. Expanding unemployment compensation benefits offers another advantage—it provides economic stimulus when it is needed without causing damage to the long-term economic condition of the country.

Congress has passed bills to help airlines, insurance companies, and big businesses. It should pass a meaningful economic stimulus bill to help families of displaced workers. The Republican leadership of the House should rise above partisan posturing and bickering with the Senate and simply pass provide unemployment insurance and health benefits now for those millions of Americans who desperately need them.

Mr. MATSUI. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. NEAL).

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Mr. NEAL of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, today I am reminded of the disappointment that Charlie Brown feels on Valentine's Day when that cute little redhead did not give him a valentine. Many of us had great hopes that we could simply take up relief for unemployed workers, a bill which passed the Senate unanimously last week; but just like Charlie Brown, we keep checking the mailbox and unfortunately come away again filled with disappointment.

The Republican bill today is composed mainly of some old, worn-out tax items that have been around for a long time. It reflects the tired philosophy of trickle-down economics, take care of the large and powerful corporations and eventually the rest will trickle down to us. But it is wrong to hold this bill hostage to temporary tax relief for the unemployed who, but for the sake of this debate, will find themselves on the outside looking in again for a few more weeks.

The disappointment I feel today is not in the same league with the disappointment that many hard-working Americans are going to feel, however. By slapping on a \$150 billion tax cut in the dead of night, the leadership has ensured that this bill will not reach the President's desk this weekend. Two million Americans are approaching or already have exhausted their unemployment benefits and cannot be assured that any relief is in sight. That disappointment is one that I hoped the Congress would not be delivering on this Valentine's Day.

Reject the bill in front of us. Let us go back to work. Pass a simple, clean extension of benefits for the unemployed and their families who depend upon them and today who depend upon us.

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. WATKINS), a valued member of the Committee on Ways and Means.

(Mr. WATKINS of Oklahoma asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WATKINS of Oklahoma. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this bill.

Let me say, as my colleague from Louisiana said, two-thirds of it goes to individuals. Let no mistake be made about that. Another third goes to business and industry that produces jobs.

Let me say, I am flabbergasted at a lot of the folks who get up and say it does not help other people, only the big corporations. Let me tell you who it helps, also. The suspension of net income limitation helps support those hundreds of thousands of small stripper wells in Texas, the roughnecks out there, the oil patch workers who are losing their jobs. I am amazed that many of them did not know that over on this side.

But let me tell you also who it hurts. My heart goes out to those people who say they lost a job. I will do everything to build jobs, let me tell you; but I am here also trying to help those who have never had a job, many of them Native Americans. Native Americans would be helped by this bill. They will be able to have possible manufacturing jobs and many of the others developed with accelerated depreciation on their lands. We need to be helping those folks, also.

Let me assure you, this bill does more than help the big industries. I resent the fact that you state that you are doing it for political purposes, because I do not plan to come back.

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the distinguished gentleman from Arizona (Mr. HAYWORTH), a member of the Committee on Ways and Means.

Mr. HAYWORTH. Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day this afternoon, we are faced with a fundamental question. Implicit in the criticism from our friends in the minority is the notion that there is only one course of action here and that is 13 weeks' unemployment and that is it. What we do here is improve the legislation, not only 13 weeks' unemployment but an economic trigger for those States that are having challenges.

Moreover, provisions for health benefits. Recall our friend from Kansas brought a letter down a little while ago from the President asking not only for unemployment benefits but for health benefits. It is our role in the Congress of the United States to take legislation from the other body and improve it and we do so.

And there is something else that is important. This bill also provides tax relief that fires the engines of economic opportunity. We passed it once. We have passed it a second time. On this third occasion, we give the other body the opportunity to join us in an effective plan to put people back to work and to provide for those who have lost their jobs.

I ask my colleagues to support the measure.

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. RYAN), a valued member of the Committee on Ways and Means.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. I thank the gentleman for yielding time.